

YS soccer squad squares off against German team

Pee-Wee team ends season with international 'friendly'

Story and photos by Hugh C. McBride

Seventeen months after the United States and Germany faced off in a historic World Cup semifinal contest, soccer squads from each nation again took to the pitch – this time on Kelley Barracks.

The stakes weren't quite as large Nov. 15 in Stuttgart as they were June 21, 2002 in South Korea – nor, for that matter, were the players – but the Kelley contest lacked for neither passion nor patriotism.

"[The players] were all fired up because we were playing the Germans," said Dominick Puricelli, coach of the Youth Services Pee-Wee (ages 5 and 7) team that took on a squad of similarly aged players from nearby Plieningen.

Though the U.S. players were a bit awed by the skills of their host-nation counterparts, Puricelli said, apprehension gave way to enthusiasm once the contest was underway.

"They were a little nervous until the other team scored," he said. "Then they got mad."

Though national pride may technically have been at stake, Puricelli and YS Sports Director Bob Gridley agreed that the overriding emotion was one of friendship.

"The kids did awesome," Puricelli said. "They all had a fun time and enjoyed themselves."

Added Gridley, "It's great any time we can get Germans and Americans together like this."

And lest anyone think this "no one went home a loser" sentiment was just for show, the final score should put those doubts to rest: The game ended in a tie, 8 to 8.



[Above] Stuttgart goalie Sean Haisley, 5, hits the deck to make a save.



[Above] Stuttgart defenders Gabriel Rosenwald, 5 (left), and Alexis Cools, 7, close in on the ball.

[Left] Nicholas Puricelli, 7, dribbles upfield with three defenders in pursuit.